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International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AMUSEMENT PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS

QUESTION 1: What are the origins or history of the amusement parks and attractions industry?

ANSWER: It is an American institution that has been developed and nurtured through American ingenuity. The ideas of the walk through gardens from England and the Punch and Judy show from France are some of the ideas that give rise to the initial ideas that allow the development of amusement parks and attractions. The first amusement park, or an amusement park and attraction like event, was on Manhattan Island in the year 1860. It consisted of hayrides, stands that sold food items, etc. An admission fee was charged for this event. The first ride was developed around 1900 in France and was brought to the United States. French people would not adopt such a ride, but the American people fell in love with it. The idea for the merry-go-round came from China and was a training device for their cavalry. In fact, the brass ring was originally conceived as a training device for those individuals in use of the lance. Many of the other rides that appeared in the first amusement parks were some form of transportation. The roller coaster is a Russian phenomena. Literally translated, it means "Russian mountain." The idea was imported from Russia and a ride down a mountain on the basis of gravity was the original concept. It took American ingenuity to invent the chain-drive to raise it to the peak so that gravity could be utilized to bring it down the other side of the mountain.

QUESTION 2: What is the difference between theme parks and carnivals.

ANSWER: There is very little difference. They have the same operation problems. If there is a difference it is in the fact that a theme park is stationary and a carnival is mobile and as a result, a carnival has more problems with maintenance than theme parks. Another difference may be in the emphasis of the concessions. The concession concept is more important to a carnival than the theme park.

QUESTION 3: What are the challenges of the amusement parks and attractions industry?

ANSWER: They are: 1) change because of greater sophistication of the

consumer, 2) how to change a particular enterprise to meet the competition/change, and 3) the need for constant moderation. The thread through these three elements is that a park is never complete and that something new must always be added to remain competitive.

QUESTION 4: What are the employment opportunities in the amusement parks and attractions industry?

ANSWER: The employment picture is good, especially if you have high school and college experience and if you are willing to start at the bottom of an organization and work your way up into the management and operation positions. Most of the individuals who do the employing in the industry require this requisite knowledge of operations and management from the lower positions, except in a specialty area like marketing. In terms of the opportunities for ownership, the chances are probably small because most are a corporation, close partnership or a family operation. The chance for entrepreneurship is in the concessionaire phase of the business. The larger parks usually run their own concessionaire and gaming operations while the smaller parks usually provide for greater opportunities in these areas. Usually the concessions are operated on the basis of a percentage of the gross and most often it is between 25-30%, but this figure could vary greatly based upon the type of operation.

QUESTION 5: What has been the trend for growth in the industry?

ANSWER: About 25 years ago the Business Census indicated that there were about 1,200 amusement parks. The current census indicates there is about 525. There has been a significant decline in the number of parks. Yet, the gross revenue has increased significantly. The decline can be traced to the following reasons: 1) in the mid-1950's kiddie parks developed to service the large number of individuals from the baby-boom years. 2) As the parks became older the cost of modernization significantly increased and the land was more valuable in terms of its profit making potential. They were sold because of the increased replacement value. 3) Children of the owners did not want to remain in the industry. And 4) The dominance of the automobile which made it easier to travel a greater distance to see an attraction.

QUESTION 6: What are employers seeking in employees?

ANSWER: They are looking for someone who shows imagination, a good personality, an ability to meet and work with people, an ability to keep cool under pressure, and aggressiveness. They hire many people with strong liberal arts and social science backgrounds. The primary specialties that are needed are: marketing (with an emphasis on accounting), merchandising, and food operations.

QUESTION 7: What is the primary uniqueness of individuals who are employed in this industry?

ANSWER: These individuals are more people-oriented and caring. In fact, some of the individuals who have invested heavily in the amusement park and attraction business have been business people who do not understand the people-orientation of the business. They have been successful but not near as successful as those who apply good business

principles in a people-oriented way. Another important dimension is understanding the leisure experience as an intangible outcome such as escape, fantasy, etc. These types of experiences cannot be related to dollars and cents processes.

QUESTION 8: What are the basic processes that most personnel specialists use in making their decision about potential employees?

ANSWER: Most of the decisions are made very quickly and on a very subjective basis. This is the same with many personnel people and they develop an intuitive sense about whether the individual will fit into the organization as well as their supervisory potential. The first few seconds of an interview are extremely important in that first impressions are made and the remainder of the interview is either confirming or denying these impressions.

QUESTION 9: What is the basic nature of the people who are hired in the industry?

ANSWER: The industry has a greater variance in responsibility than any other industry. It takes one particular personality type to be a ride operator, another to be a games person, and still another to be a food concessionaire. These personality factors are the overriding element that usually determines success in the industry. Another important factor is aptitude. One must have an ability to perform certain tasks but it is usually only a secondary consideration to personality.

QUESTION 10: How did the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions start?

ANSWER: In the winter of 1870 a small group of 12 amusement parks and attractions operators, primarily from the eastern United States, met and decided to form the association. The reason for the meeting was that this was a post-war (World War I) period, the baby boom had started and there was a demand for entertainment and amusement types of attractions. As a result, there were many individuals who were exploiters who were traveling around the country selling bogus services and products. As a result, the association was formed to counterbalance this movement and to help maintain the image of amusement parks and attractions.

QUESTION 11: How has the purpose of the organization changed since its inception?

ANSWER: As the association evolved, managers and operators began to realize that they were in a non-competitive business and the sharing of ideas and problems with one another was a positive developmental step to the industry. They were able to address such common problems as safety codes, promotion, and fire insurance. These were some of the initial problems addressed by the association. The more things change, the more they remain the same. What I mean by this statement is that the same problems that we were talking about with the inception of the organization are some of the same problems that we are addressing today. The problems that are being addressed in any one time period are based upon the emphases that the profession is receiving at that point in time. At some points in time, safety is a major concern and, as a

result, has been emphasized during two or three periods to respond to legislative issues, consumerism, etc. Other forces within the society have caused problems and then other issues are emphasized.

QUESTION 12: Characterize the membership.

ANSWER: There are three types of members: 1) members who represent management and ownership, 2) associate members who represent manufacturers and suppliers, and 3) individual memberships which are primarily made up of concessionnaires. The association is governed by a board of directors made up of active members, one elected associate member and one elected individual member. There used to be an advisory board that represented the associate and individual membership but these elected positions on the board replaced the advisory structure.

QUESTION 13: What are some of the more important services that an association can offer to its membership?

ANSWER: One of the most important things is a well-planned conference or professional workshop and excellent exhibition show for the exchange of ideas among manufacturers, suppliers, owners and operators.

QUESTION 14: What has been one of the most effective techniques for stimulating change in the organization as an association administrator?

ANSWER: One has to realize that businessmen like to emphasize quality in an effective operation. The bottom line is profits. Therefore, the most effective technique through the years has been the introduction of new ideas that either will help them increase their profits through increasing the volume of business or the increasing of profits through becoming more effective in reducing costs.

QUESTION 15: What is the interface relationship with other organizations?

ANSWER: There are two types of relationships: 1) those that are directly involved in the industry and 2) those that are peripherally associated. Those that are directly involved are the Outdoor Amusement Business Association and the Showmen's League of America. The Outdoor Amusement Business Association deals with the temporary operations and the IAAPA deals more with the permanent facilities. The Showmen's League of America is a fraternal organization of those involved in the industry. These associations complement IAAPA's work and they serve as a sounding board for ideas. The other types of organizations are the tourist organizations, the American Hotel and Motel Association, and National Highway Safety, etc. The primary function of these organizations is of an ancillary interest. There are also the professional associations that are directly related to the administration of such organizations. Usually members of trade associations are members of these and freely exchange ideas about management problems. This idea exchange allows for the development and integration of effective methods that work with various types of trade associations.